

Parents are Their Child's First Teacher

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Many simple everyday occurrences are extremely important to your child's development. Never underestimate the value of even 15 minutes of quality time spent with your child. You are your child's first teacher.

Talk, Talk, Talk

From the time of birth, talking to your child is important. With the first babbles, language exchange is important to your child's language development. Talk about your surroundings; things familiar to your child's world. Name what you see in the house; as you ride in the car; and as you shop in stores.

If your child speaks in one word utterances, expand the word into a sentence, so that the child hears a sentence: **Child:** *dog* , **Parent:** *The fluffy brown dog is barking.*

Always encourage the child's use of language: *Place a favorite toy out of reach* *Give the child a cookie; give the child's friend two cookies* *Say rhymes and let the child fill in the rhyming word* *Encourage counting: one nose, two hands, to help develop a sense of oneness, twoness, threeness.*

As you talk, give individual attention for five or ten minutes. The amount of time should match the child's attention span. Be a good listener. Follow your child's lead for conversation and enjoyable interaction.

Read, Read, Read

With picture books, talk about the pictures. If a book has too many words, paraphrase, tell the story. You may need to begin by talking about the pictures. *Read as long as the child's attention lasts* *Talk about the*

front of the book, the top of the page, point to the words *Play games with sounds.* This is very important to your child's literary development.

This activity lets the child know that words are made up of sounds; that conversation is made up of words. *Clap names of family and friend: Bob (one clap), mother (two claps).* *Play the merry-to-round or rubber band game.* *Stretch out the sounds of the word: fff aaa nnn (stretch). Say it fast—fan.* *Play rhyming games* *Play I spy: something that begins like pan (pillow); something that begins like mug (mat, man).* These games can be played with a child before the child has any knowledge of the alphabet.

Story reading or story telling is important as this activity helps the child know the typical pattern of events that one expects to hear in a story.

When your child shows interest in the alphabet, follow your child's lead. Print names; print familiar words that begin with the same letter. Help your child know which letters are the same and which are different. If your child has an interest in learning letters of the alphabet, introduce letters that are not similar in their looks or sounds.

Be creative in helping your child develop remembering devices. Use things that are funny and familiar. Encourage your child to draw and tell you the story of the picture, which you can write down. Children's writing emerges from squiggles, to strings of lines, to favorite letters, to a beginning letter followed by other letters or lines.

Young children's art may consist of lines and colors. Comment on the strong lines e.g. *What a great blue color.* Reflect on what you see; ask the child to tell you about the picture. If a child isn't interested in drawing, provide plastic animals, people, and vehicles that the child can manipulate and create a story.

Work Space

As children enter school, they need to have a designated study place. This location can be an agreed upon decision, but should be used consistently. The location should be visible to an adult. If your child has a short attention span, invest in a kitchen timer. Set it for 15 minutes. If your child is engaged in study during this time, when the timer goes off, give the child 5 minutes of free time. If your child has not been working during the 15 minutes, have the child stand and stretch then go back to work. Be sure to practice with your child what studying means, what on-task behavior looks like.

Help Your Child Be Organized

Color code; choose a color for each subject. The book cover has that color, spiral notes, books or dividers match. Assignments are written in matching color. Have a zipper plastic pouch for pencils, scissors, and loose supplies. Be sure that your child's assignment book has the same format on each page, e.g., subject, assignments, pages in text, materials needed, date due. Multiple copies of the page should be made. Have an 8 1/2 x 11 monthly calendar. Put due dates in red and a two-day reminder in

yellow. You can include whatever important information is needed for the month.

Reading

As your child begins to read narrative stories, graphic organizers will become important. A story map outlining the setting, characters, problem, sequence of steps to solve story, and conclusion will help your child know the important information from this story.

When your child discovers the main idea of the story, have the child say it to you. You then can tell the story in one simple sentence of no more than 10 words.

To help reading comprehension, as you read with your child, let your child read the title and predict what the story will be about. Help the child tie prior knowledge to the story to support comprehension. Talk about the story.

Reading ability improves by being engaged in reading; Take turns; have your child read a favorite page. **Read together.** If a computer is available, make use of CD Rom stories, such as *Little Monster*, *Berenstain Bears*, *Sheila Rae*, *Ruff's Bone*, or *Little Critter*. In these stories the words are highlighted as they are read. Also children can read, and click on words that they don't know. This is a very enjoyable way to read.

The important component is consistent, daily quality interaction. The development of literacy requires 15 minutes of quality interaction each day. Your child needs to see that reading is important to you, that reading is an enjoyable experience, and that it is worth the hard work that it may require.